Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025 with funding from
Graduate Theological Union

https://archive.org/details/generalhistoryof00unse

A GENERAL HISTORY OF

THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

A thesis submitted

in candidacy for the degree of

Bachelor of Divinity

in the

Berkeley Baptist Divinity School

by

Wallace S. Johnson

GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION
LIBRARY
1962

Department of
Church History

March the tenth, 1947
Berkeley, California

Thesis
cage
1947

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, A. A. — Twenty Years in the Wild West. Chicago. Free Church Publications. Undated.

Beardsley, Frank Grenville — A History of American Revivals. New York. American Tract Society. 1912.

Benson, P. (Compiler) — Hemlands-Klockan. Minneapolis. Privately printed. 1907.

Halleen, E. A. — Sunshine and Shadow. Chicago. The Evangelical Beacon. Undated.

Lindgren, Anna J. — Afterglow. Chicago. Free Church Publications. 1937

Princell, Mrs. Josephine — Frederick Franson, World Missionary. Chicago. Chicago-Bladet Publishing Co. Undated.

Princell, Josephine — J. G. Princell's Levnadsminnen. Chicago. J. V. Martenson's Trycheri. 1916.

Stephenson, George M. — The Religious Aspects of Swedish immigration. Minneapolis. University of Minnesota Press. 1932.

Sweet, William Warren — The Story of Religion in America. New York. Harper & Bros. 1939.

Anniversary Publications:

Minnesskrift — Minneapolis. Larson Printing Co. 1914.

A Book of Remembrance	Memorial to Prof. Wedell. Chicago. Free Church Publications. 1941.
Fiftieth Anniversary Album	Published by the Christian Children's Home. Holdrege, Nebraska. 1939.
Fiftieth Anniversary Pamphlet	Published by the Evangelical Free Church Bible Institute and Seminary. Chicago. 1947.
Golden Jubilee Book	Published by the Executive Committee of the Evangelical Free Church. Minneapolis. 1934.
Laborers Together With God	Published by the Ministerial Association of the Evangelical Free Church. 1945.
Lift Up Your Eyes	Published by the China Missionaries of the Evangelical Free Church. Hong Kong. 1941.
Year Books	Published by the Evangelical Free Church. Minneapolis. 1940-1946.

Bulletins and Pamphlets:

A Training Center	Published by the Evangelical Free Church Bible Institute and Seminary. 1944.
Building Upon a Sure Foundation	Conference Sermon preached by Rev. E. A. Halleen. Rockford. June 19, 1935. Printed by the Evangelical Free Church.
Do You Know?	Published by the Evangelical Free Church. Undated.
Free Church Youth	Published by the Free Church Youth Fellowship of the Evangelical Free Church. 1946.
Ev. Free Church in Venezuela	Published by the Evangelical Free Church Missionaries laboring in Venezuela. September. 1944.

Missionary Bulletin	Published by the Foreign Missions Board of the Evangelical Free Church. Vol. I, No. 2. January, 1947.
School Catalog	Published by the Evangelical Free Church Bible Institute and Seminary. 1943-45.

Periodicals:

The Evangelical Beacon	Published by the Evangelical Free Church since 1931 in Chicago.
Chicago-Bladet	Published by the Evangelical Free Church since 1887 in the Swedish language in Chicago.

SYNOPSIS OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: Historical Background, the Swedish Scene.

CHAPTER II: Historical Background, the American Scene.

CHAPTER III: Missionary Endeavors.

I China.

II Africa.

III Venezuela.

CHAPTER IV: Institutions.

I The Seminary and Bible Institute.

II Christian Children's Home.

III Swedish Old People's Home.

CHAPTER V: Organizations and Publications.

I Woman's Home and Foreign Missionary Society.

II The Ministerial Association.

III The Free Church Youth Fellowship.

IV Publications.

CHAPTER VI: The Years Ahead.

APPENDIX

INTRODUCTION

There comes a time in the life of a denomination, when it is fitting and proper to pause for a moment and survey the road thus far traversed. That backward glance must never become a gaze, for with institutions as with personalities, the motto must always be "Forward and Onward". But the glance behind will encourage the heart as the traveler contemplates the progress made. The Evangelical Free Church of America has paused occasionally, not often, during its sixty odd years of existence to glance backward. We pause now again for another such backward glance.

The conditions which called the Evangelical Free Church of America into existence in large measure no longer exist. No longer is the stream of immigration pouring large numbers of Swedish speaking immigrants into frontier settlements where they must be ministered to, if at all, in their native tongue. A second generation, and a third, has come, and the process of Americanization is now all but complete. And as the Americanization process has taken place, the Evangelical Free Church has discovered itself in the great Evangelical tradition of the English-speaking churches. She is no longer alone and isolated, but amongst a large body of kindred hearts.

In this history of the Evangelical Free Church, we shall first of all attempt an analysis of the peculiar soil from which it sprang, and the religious forces at play amongst the Swedish-speaking immigrants. An account of the development of the work in pioneer

days when the foundations were being laid will be given, and following in due order, a record of the missionary activities and the development of the institutions now operating to serve the denomination.

Prophecy is no part of the historians task. Yet is is hoped that this "glance over the shoulder" may in some measure at least clarify some future objectives -- that the shadow of the past will point the direction into the future.

1. William Warren Sweet, The Story of Religion in America p. 131

CHAPTER I

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND - THE SCANDINAVIAN SCENE

The nineteenth century was a unique period in world history, and the events which took place on the American scene are without parallel. The fascination of the American frontier with its forward movement, its rugged life and its challenge, will forever attract the historian as one of the most colorful periods of all human history. This frontier was fed by a constant flow of immigration from Europe. The great desire to be free from the poverty and oppressions of the "old country", and the tug of adventure and promise in the new brought hordes of immigrants to the shores of America. These immigrants tended to form national groups in the new land, and one of the features of the American frontier was the groupings of people with a common heritage. Many a successful American citizen today can well remember the heritage of the home in which he was reared, with its foreign tongue, its traditions which now and then reflected themselves in the life of the home, especially at festival seasons of the year, and its requirements upon the family in its social setting.

To the large groups of foreigners who came to America in the nineteenth century to found their homes, the Scandinavians made a significant contribution. Though the Swedes had come to America early (to Delaware in 1638),[1.] the great flow of Scandinavian immigration came during the period 1870-1910, when one and three-quarters

1. William Warren Sweet, The Story of Religion in America, p. 541

2. Ibid. p. 522.

3. Ibid. p. 488.

million Northmen, one half of whom were Swedes, came to the new land. By 1916, 2,700,000 persons of pure Scandinavian stock were living in America, most of whom had come after 1880.[1] Of these Scandinavians, most preferred agriculture to city trades, though in 1890, some 70,000 Scandinavians were to be found in Chicago, and nearly as many in the Twin Cities.[2]

Out from this flow of immigration has come the Scandinavian churches of America, the Lutheran (Augustana Synod), the Mission Covenant, the Swedish Baptist, the Swedish Methodist, the Evangelical Free, and their Danish and Norwegian counterparts. Each of these churches had their birth and their early growth in the Swedish-speaking communities of the American frontier, as they sought to minister to the needs of the immigrant. Yet with all their faithful labor, they were not able to win all for Christ. It has been estimated that only seven per cent of the Danes joined any church, not more than twenty per cent of the Swedes, and less than thirty per cent of the Norwegians.[3] In order to fully appreciate the whole religious situation on the Swedish-American scene, it is necessary to review the situation in Sweden. There is no question but that religion played a dominant role as a motive for immigration from Sweden to America.

It is a significant fact that there are no folk of Swedish blood who yield allegiance to the Roman Church. Sweden is a most intensely Protestant country, and Sweden's sons in America have

1. George M. Stephenson, The Religious Aspects of Swedish Immigration p. 1

been every bit as zealous in defending the principles of the Reformation as were ever the Pilgrim Fathers. But though the Reformation completely conquered Sweden and brought about a radical doctrinal departure from Roman Catholicism, the organization of the church was only slightly affected. The Church of Sweden is not officially designated as "Lutheran", though it professes the faith of the Augsburg Confession which is distinctively Lutheran.[1.] The church has, however, always been an institution of the State, so much so that church and State have been identified. The pastor's office has combined the duties of an ecclesiastical person and a servant of the state. The pastor was called "präst" (priest), and the New Testament term "presbyter" was translated "präst" in the New Testament Scriptures. The country was divided into"stift" (dioceses) and "socken" (parishes), and all the people within the boundaries of the parish were members of the "församling" (congregation). Children were baptized within eight days of birth, and if parents refused, court action might be taken. Catechetical instruction began at fourteen or fifteen in the Christian faith.[2.] After an extended course of study, consisting mostly in learning the catechism by heart and certain hymns in the "Psalmbok", the student was confirmed and permitted to partake of the Lord's Supper. Up to as late as the middle of the last century, a person was required by law to partake of the Lord's Supper at least once a year in order to enjoy the rights of citizenship, to serve as a

1. George M. Stephenson, The Religious Aspects of Swedish Immigration pp. 1-2

2. Ibid. p. 2

3. Ibid. p. 3

witness in the courts of justice, to enter the marriage relation, or take up any secular employment.[1.]

These ecclesiastical regulations may seem to have many undesirable elements to us, but they did plant some very desirable traits into the fibre of Scandinavian people. A respect for God, the Church, Government, and superiors was implanted into Swedish blood, traits which the immigrant carried with him to America "to his everlasting advantage and to the immense profit of his adopted land."[2.]

The pastor was a very influential man in the community, due partially to the fact that he was a servant of the state. Rash indeed was the man who refused to remove his hat upon meeting his pastor, an indulgence which only the most reckless returned emigrant from America would dare indulge in to advertize the emancipation his American citizenship gave him. Fear and trembling assailed many a prospective emigrant as he turned steps toward the parsonage to apply for a permit to leave the fatherland. "Many remember to their dying day the lecture that was read to them about the iniquity of deserting a land of law and order and Christian morals in favor of a country where neither God nor man was respected and where the church was divided into mutually hostile sects, some of which had sent missionaries to Sweden to sow discord and create a spirit of hostility to the church of their fathers".[3.]

The fact that the pastor combined his pastoral office with that of a civil officer was criticized by the leaders of the pietistic

1. George M. Stephenson, The Religious Aspects of Swedish Immigration p. 5

2. Ibid. p.5

3. Ibid. p. 6

movement. Due to the lack of any vital religious experience on the part of the clergy as well as their theological training, they were unprepared to take any other than an opposing side to the great religious awakening that manifested itself all over the country in the two decades following 1840. Young men went into the ministry without the firm conviction of a divine "call" and their training was more classical than theological. "They knew far more about liturgics, symbolics, and dogmatics than about pastoral theology. The church became a body of frigid mechanical forms and ceremonies, which quenched the spirit and gave the people only the dry husks of formalism".[1] Rationalism had permeated the church so completely that it was described as a "magnificent ice palace".[2] The sermons were usually masterly and faithful to the text, fed the aesthetic sense of the listeners, but left the heart untouched. Rarely were free prayers offered, and formalism was so ingrained that most pastors looked with hostility upon informal gatherings, where the people met to read the Bible and unite in prayer without the guidance of a pastor.

The pastors usually held aloof from political and social reform movements, feeling that reform did not go to the bottom of the problem. They felt, too, the lash of liberalism in the political sphere "when it found expression in a deomocracy that curtailed the privileges of the official and upper classes".[3] More liberty for the people meant an open door to independent churches under

1. George M. Stephenson, The Religious Aspect of Swedish Immigration p. 7

lay control. The inability of the clergy to understand and interpret the spirit of the age in the long run alienated the church from the working men and women and reduced it to its present state of impotency. The last quarter of the nineteenth century found the church as unpopular as the Anglican Church in England and the Roman Catholic Church in Southern Europe.

The lives of the clergymen were on the whole not exemplary. Profanity and intemperance amongst them were common. The Archbishop, in an address to the convocation at Uppsala in 1868, felt constrained to mention the following sins amongst the clergy: heresy, profanity, blasphemy, dishonesty, lewdness, and sacrilege.[1] They often indulged in pleasures which pietists condemned. After a wedding dinner, the bride danced first with the pastor, and the groom first with the pastor's wife. They were often negligent in performing the duties of their office. It is a sorry picture indeed which one must look upon as one contemplates the conditions existing in the state church during the 1800's in Sweden.

With the low spirituality amongst the clergy went also a low morality amongst the laity. George Scott, a Weslyan missionary, who deserves to be better known amongst Scandinavian Americans than he is, wrote of Sweden in 1830:

"Christian experience seems utterly disregarded in this country; and empty uninfluential form is the highest object at which they aim.

1. George M. Stephenson, The Religious Aspects of Swedish Immigration p. 8

2. Ibid., p. 9

3. Ibid., p. 9

"The Lutheran Church, by all the accounts I can get, is fast asleep if not dead; the Priesthood has become worldly, sensual and mercenary, the ordinances are neglected and experimental religion is unknown.

"I had such a view of the awful dead formality into which the whole of Stockholm Priests and people is sunk, that I was constrained to groan deeply on their account.

"There is such an utter want of spirituality--such a miserable ignorance of experimental religion--such a disposition to worldlymindedness and the pursuit of several pleasures--such an evident dread lest the subjects of the Gospel should be hinted at out of the place of worship".[1.]

He listed the besetting sins of the Swedish people as: "desecration of the Sabbath, intemperance, profanity, and he lamented their love for the theatre and the dance and their immorality. 'I truly dwell where Satan's seat is, every person is a religious person, but a pious person is a living wonder'".[2.] The worst fault of the clergy was their failure to do their work in the midst of this sinfulness. They preached as though all sinners were believers. Preaching in the morning, they would often attend the theatre or a ball on the same holy day. "Bishops would even give balls, often on Sunday, for youths who had taken their first communion."[3.]

1. George M. Stephenson, The Religious Aspects of Swedish Immigration pp. 24-29

2. Ibid., pp. 29-33

3. Frank Grenville Beardsley, A History of American Revivals pp. 91-93

But the darkest hour is the hour before the dawn, and amidst all the low spirituality, a gracious movement was beginning, which would not only change the picture in Sweden, but would have still greater effects upon the Swedish-American religious scene. If one is to fully understand the religious situation in Scandinavian America, he must look at the Church of Sweden through the eyes of the pietists, or "läsare" as they were called, for it was these people, who read their Bibles with child-like faith, who laid the foundations of the Swedish Churches in America.[1] These people, laymen and "läsare" pastors, denied that the whole reservoir of God's grace lay in the hands of the State church, that religion should be a monopoly of men trained in a theology devised by the State. Admittance to the fellowship of the faithful should be by a radiant living faith, and even the pastor should renounce wordly things.

The religious awakening in Sweden which was to have such a profound effect upon the religious situation there had its beginnings in Småland in the first years of the 1840's.[2] This particular movement flooded the newpapers with weird stories of unusual religious manifestations called "predikosukan" (preaching sickness). It had much the same excesses that appeared in the religious revivals on the American frontier, especially in the awakening of 1800, but without any connection whatsoever with them.[3] The people of Småland had come from a stiff-necked and stern stock, had made many difficulties for the pastors who had served them. Yet, as the awakening spread

1. George M. Stephenson, The Religious Aspects of Swedish Immigration pp. 34-48

amongst them, it seemed to conquer the inbred reserve, and some most undignified manifestations resulted: shouting, jumping, rolling, barking like dogs, singing and jerking. The preaching by these afflicted with the "preaching sickness" was not profound, consisting mostly of simple admonitions to repentance and the renunciation of sins such as card-playing, dancing, drunkenness and pride. Yet these simple preachers were listened to and this awakening continued into the 60's and even the 70's, though it was most violent in the years from 1841-1843. Some two to three thousand were affected in Småland, and in the years from 1840-1850 almost every part of Sweden was touched by the activity of the lay preachers.[1] The significance of the Småland phenomena lay in the fact that the simple, unlearned and superstitous people were mightily touched by the evangelistic preachers. A bridgehead had been established for a great religious revival and a new day had dawned.

The awakening as it was carried forward in Sweden was peculiar in that in large measure it was a movement separate from and outside the Church of Sweden. The term "läsare" connotes pietism and non-conformity. It means "readers", and originated in the practise of meeting in homes to read the Bible and devotional books. In general, the pietists were strong Lutherans, and attended the parish churches faithfully, but also met together for singing, praying, and reading the Bible, insisting they had as much right to do this as did

1. George M. Stephenson, The Religious Aspects of Swedish Immigration pp. 36-41

2. Ibid., p. 48.

3. Ibid., p. 48.

the ungodly to gather for dancing, card-playing, drinking, and theatrical performances. It was amongst these people that the awakening was carried on. Some of the names that still thrill the hearts of the older folk in every Swedish-American religious group are those of Rosenius, Fjellstedt, Oscar Ahnfelt, the Gospel singer, and Lina Sandell, the song writer. [1].

The "läsare" gradually came to think of the body of believers as consisting of saved folks regenerated by the Holy Spirit. From this followed the principle that there should be no connection between Church and State. "There was no reconciling this view with that held by the Church of Sweden, as it was inextricably intertwined with the temporal power." [2]. Its pastors were often unregenerate men and strangers to the grace of God, and made little or no attempt to discriminate between regenerate and unregenerate. Many leaders of the Augustana Synod, and without exception all the reformed Swedish-American churches, held this view. [3].

1. George M. Stephenson, The Religious Aspects of Swedish Immigration pp. 124, 262-263, and the Preface.

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND — THE AMERICAN SCENE

As we approach the problem of the religious situation amongst the Swedes in the United States the latter half of the nineteenth century, several factors must be kept in mind. Among them is the temperamental and social background of the immigrant from Sweden. By temperament, he was restrained, conservative, self-conscious, often self-distrustful. His social background made him respect law and order, and the ministry as a whole, as the symbol of religion. His dialect often made him the object of persecution and his reticent personality drove him to bear his inward suffering without complaint, and to find his fellowship solely with his own people. He did not mix easily, and moved slowly into any adjustment he had to make with his new environment.[1]

On the other hand, he moved into an atmosphere of liberty and freedom which had been unknown to him in the homeland. With all restraint removed, one might expect him to give way to riotous undisciplined living. Some of them did, but by far the majority maintained a self-respect and an obedience to law and order which was a benediction to any community in which they settled. His temperament and his social heritage acted as a ballast and kept him steady.

When it came to his religious life, there was no state church to demand his formal worship, and in the freedom of his adopted land,

1. William Warren Sweet, The Story of Religion in America pp. 333-335

such an institution as a state church seemed strangely inadequate to meet the heart needs of the lonely pioneer in the new world. There developed no institution comparable to the formal state church on the American frontier amongst Scandinavian peoples. This does not mean that today there does not exist amongst them something of a formal religion akin to that of the Church of Sweden. This will be vigorously affirmed by some and as vigorously denied by others. It is true, however, that amongst Scandinavians, as amongst other national groups, the economic and social security that has replaced the hazards and loneliness of the frontier has affected the state of religion. Security is a boon to the physical man, but is often a handicap to the spiritual man.

The cause of Christ in the days of the nineteenth century was spread in large measure by the revival method on the American frontier.[1] The revival method has been spoken of as an American phenomena, and it has been used with perhaps greater success in America in the nineteenth century than anywhere else. But it is a significant fact, almost providentially significant, that the Swedish immigrant, who had any religious leanings whatever, was the product of the "läsare" revival in Sweden, and coming to America, he found the same warm-hearted movement in progress over here. D. L. Moody was in his most fruitful years when immigration from Sweden was at its highest, and the "läsare" immigrants found in the preaching of D. L. Moody and his workers, and in the warm-hearted fellowship which surrounded his gather-

1. Hemlands Klockan.
   Consult the index.

2. E. A. Halleen, Sunshine and Shadow
   p. 104

ings, a kindred spirit to their own. Not that D. L. Moody was their patron saint, but rather that the type of Christianity Moody stood for was their type. Take such a hymnal as "Hemlands Klockan", used so freely in the Swedish-American congregations one and two generations ago, and one will find along with the hymns of the Swedish revival, the hymns of the American revival written by Sankey, Bliss, Fanny Crosby, and others, translated into the Swedish language.[1.] The pastor of the Moody Memorial Church of Chicago in the 1920's, Dr. Philpott, once said that he had the largest Swedish church in Chicago, meaning that a large portion of his membership were of Swedish ancestry. As has been stated, not all the immigrants remained true to the faith, but those who did were almost invariably "läsare" folk, and those converted by the continuous revivals that spread through the Swedish-American communities in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The formalism of the Church of Sweden had nothing to offer the immigrant in America.

The place of the Evangelical Free Church in the religious picture during the days in which it, and the other Swedish-American churches were taking shape, was away over to the left in its emphasis upon individual sovereignty.[2.] The term "Free" in the denominational name does not refer primarily to a situation in Sweden. It includes that, but since there is no counterpart in Sweden to what is here called the Evangelical Free Church, its main concern is with a situation confined primarily to the American scene. The freedom and the liberty which the new converts had found in the new land, and par-

1. Golden Jubilee Book
   pp. 13-14

2. E. A. Halleen: Building Upon a Sure Foundation, Conference Sermon preached in Rockford, Illinois, June 19, 1935.

ticularly in the conversion experiences, had so gripped the hearts of the leaders of the "Free Church" movement that they felt they could submit to no control whatever. These free spirits, in fellowship with each other, felt they could join no synod or group wherein any authority from above could be exerted upon the individual conscience.[1.] Today, each Evangelical Free Church is an authority to itself, is sovereign over its own affairs. No creed or ecclesiastical system binds the churches together, simply a mutual fellowship of the spirit, and a missionary program on the home and foreign field. Even upon such a matter as baptism in which there is almost a unanimous agreement in favor of immersion, individual conscience is permitted to guide, and baptism is not made requisite to church membership in the great majority of the Evangelical Free Churches.[2.]

The men who laid the foundations of the Evangelical Free Church were pioneers. They were pioneers as far as their physical work and labor was concerned, laboring on a frontier, bearing with the people the hardships and the uncertainties of that life. They were pioneers in the realm of things theological. They were almost without exception men without standardized theological training. They had had their own profound religious experiences, and they had the firm conviction that they had a message to tell. Their only text was the Bible, they were students of one book only. If the Bible said it, it was so! The need of conversion, salvation by grace through

1. Golden Jubilee Book
   pp. 14-16

2. E. A. Halleen, Sunshine and Shadow
   pp. 165-170

3. Golden Jubilee Book
   pp. 27-30

faith, the operation of the Holy Spirit in the salvation and sanctification of the believer, and the immanent and premillenial return of the Lord were the doctrines most heartily cherished and expounded. They were pioneers in building churches and in developing a system of cooperation between church groups. Cooperation, however, was always secondary to conscience. They were violently against denominationalism and cooperation was exceedingly difficult in the early days.[1.] As a consequence, the Evangelical Free Church could have been, and should be, many times larger today than what it actually is. Or it might be said that had the early founders of the Free Churches been less individualistic and more cooperative, there would most likely have been no Evangelical Free Church of America. Yet there is a place for this fellowship and the things it has stood for down through the years, and to some of its present day leaders, it seems as though a vacuum would have developed had there not been an Evangelical Free Church.[2.] Because of its ultra-individualism, it has fed into kindred fellowships a considerable number of able men and women.

The year of our Lord, 1884, is the year in which the first organizational steps were taken which have resulted in the founding of the Evangelical Free Church of America.[3.] A meeting had been called for the fall of that year, October 14-19. In the fall of the preceding year, a Bible Conference had been held in Bush Hall in Chicago, October 10-17, in which preachers and laymen from various parts of the country and from several denominations came together and spent a

1. See list of Churches in appendix. Sixteen churches now affiliated with the Evangelical Free Church were in existence in 1884. Of these, only two date date before 1880. These sixteen were not centralized. Colorado had one, South Dakota two, Iowa three, Illinois two, Michigan one, Minnesota four, Nebraska three, and Pennsylvania one. The present main strength of the Evangelical Free Church lies in the Mid-west. Minnesota has about one-fourth of the churches.

2. Golden Jubilee Book
pp. 27-30

profitable week around the Word of God. A committee of three men, J. G. Princell, L. Hallgren, and J. Martenson was elected to plan for another meeting the year following.

At this meeting in 1884, held in Boone, Iowa, steps were taken to call a missionary, Mr. Ungert, and his wife, as the first representatives of the Free Churches on the foreign field. The prospective missionary and his wife were called, but somehow failed to go to the field. It is significant, however, that they were called. It reveals the inner tie and the missionary vision that bound this fellowship together. [1.]

Though there were no definite organizational steps taken, enough was accomplished to place the beginnings of the Evangelical Free Church at this conference. An Executive Committee of seven members was elected, which was authorized to have charge of the work in accordance with the decisions of the annual meeting, to call workers, and to be responsible for the funds collected. This committee of seven still continues to function between the annual meetings of the denomination. The new organization was called: "Kristnas Gemensamma Verksamhet" (fellowship of Christian activity), an indication of the state of mind and heart of the fellowship. [2.] The following is a resolution adopted at the gathering, a resolution that sheds further light upon the foundation principles of the Evangelical Free Church:

1. The Church of God on earth consists of the entire multitude of converted, born-again and to Christ baptized

persons, wherever they as such may dwell.

2. Each local church or group of believers in any locality shall in its government and existence as a church, so constitute itself that it shall have the same characteristics as the church at large and have rules, requisites for membership; etc., neither broader nor narrower than those of the church at large.

3. The various groups of believers here and there have the right and the obligation to labor for the salvation of souls and for their own edification in faith, love, and unity with all the given means and in accordance with the gifts of the Holy Spirit as recorded in 1 Cor., 12th chapter.

4. Always remembering that the church is one in Christ; that He is the Head of the church, and that the Holy Spirit is the infallible Leader into all truth; and that the Word of God, especially the New Testament, is the Constitution of the church and its unforgettable rule, therefore it behooves each group of believers to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free (Gal. 5:1); i.e., individually as well as collectively we have the right and obligation to remain independent of all forms of church authority, and to keep ourselves out of all obligations that might curtail such privileges and perfect liberty. But the local churches should

therefore the more affiliate themselves by means of conference and societies as well as with individuals in whom they have confidence. Note--that the local church has in accordance with the Word of God and the laws of our land, the right to ordain persons into Christian service, and these rights should be used in the fear of the Lord whenever so needed.

5. As members of God's commonwealth in this land do we wish, as did Israel of old, prosperity to the land wherein we dwell, and pledge ourselves to seek its best. To that end we do hereby oppose all lasciviousness and crime, knowing that sin is the ruin of any nation; especially do we express our abhorrence for such barbaric and degenerating practices as drunkenness and polygamy, which practices cause great hindrance to the furtherance of the Gospel and the salvation of people. On the other hand do we pledge ourselves to further and co-operate in every effort put forth to quell such iniquities in every honorable purpose and plan. We are also convinced, especially in regard to combating the liquor evil, that its presentation as a special feature without affiliating it with other social or political questions, will find the best support in the community, state and nation, as a total prohibition of manufacturing, selling and using of intoxicants. This goal we earnestly pray God soon may grant us

1. Golden Jubilee Book
   pp. 28,29

2. Year Book, 1946
   pp. 224-248

in His mercy.[1]

A great emphasis was placed, and has been placed down through the years upon a personal and conscious experience of the grace of God in the life. The fruit of such an experience was expected and looked for in the life of the professing Christian. Prayer and consistent and diligent Bible study were practised. Bible conferences were frequently held, and the prophetic Scriptures were the object of diligent Bible study. The return of the Lord was stressed and cherished as "the blessed hope", not in any radical way, but as the Christians glad hope, comfort, and expectation.

Such were the beginnings of the Evangelical Free Church. The churches have grown in strength and in number through the years. Today they number about 170 with a total membership of about 12,000 souls.[2] In a remarkable way they have remained true to the original convictions. Now the days of the pioneers have passed, and the revival fires that called the denomination into existence and fed the passion in the early pioneers for souls have spent themselves. Another generation must find new methods to reach souls for Christ, must find other means to keep alive in their breasts the constraining love of Christ, but they have a good foundation to build upon, and it is to their credit that they recognize it.

1. Mrs. Josephine Princell, Frederick Franson
pp. 1-20, 45-62, 146-156

2. The Missionary Broadcaster, official organ of the Scandinavian Alliance Mission, for January, 1947, lists China, Japan, South Africa, Portugal, Mongolia, India, and South America as fields in which they are now working. The S. A. M. has no official connection with the Evangelical Free Church.

CHAPTER III

MISSIONARY ENDEAVORS

As was true with the churches in general in America over the years of the nineteenth century, so it was true with the Evangelical Free Church, that the warm-hearted fellowship enjoyed in the local congregations should sooner or later find an outlet for itself and a means of useful expression in missionary enterprises. Aside from the bond for mutual fellowship, the strongest tie holding the Free Churches together was the missionary interest each had. This interest was continaully fed by the expectation of the Lord's return, and by the faithful presentation of the need of the foreign fields by such missionary minded men as Frederick Franson. Missionary Franson was a flaming advocate of missions. He played a considerable part in the work of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in his contacts with A. B. Simpson.[1] Breaking with Simpson; he had the vision to found another mission Board which is still operating under the name of the Scandinavian Alliance Mission and doing a notable work in several fields on foreign soil.[2] The Evangelical Free Church today has mission work in three foreign lands: China, Africa, and Venezuela. That the early missionary passion still lives amongst the people of the present generation is evident by the fact that the denomination has one missionary on the field for every 275 members in the home churches.

1. Golden Jubilee Book
   p. 31

2. Lift Up Your Eyes
   p. 11

3. Ibid. p. 11.

I CHINA

The oldest of the mission works carried on by the Evangelical Free Church is the work in China. The field was opened by Hans J. von Qualen.[1] The annual meeting held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in October of 1887 resolved: "On the basis of the acquaintance we have of brother Qualen and his preparation to go to China, we wish hereby to express our hearty sympathy for his plan; and the meeting regards that this heathen mission should be supported by Christian friends and become an object of their prayers".[2] Mr. von Qualen had become interested in foreign mission work as early as 1884. Shortly before leaving for China, he said these words: "I read a while ago a story about the spiritual and moral conditions among the heathen in some land, as well as about the results of Christian mission work among them. It made such a deep impression on my heart that I promised God then to offer myself to the heathen in this way: that all the means that the Lord will give me, I will use to support someone or at least help to support a person who desires to go to the heathen and work among them and sow the precious seed, God's word. With this thought and the giving of the promise, repeatedly another thought came to me: 'What about you, yourself, going?' I frequently put aside this idea, but it returned again and again, so that I had to answer: 'I will if God thus wills; He can arrange it'".[3] While a student in the Chicago Theological Seminary, the conviction grew

1. Lift up Your Eyes
   p. 12

2. Golden Jubilee Book
   pp. 235-239

on him. It was nurtured by mission work which he did amongst the Chinese in Chicago. Then the time came for him to go.

Having been ordained and commissioned, Mr. von Qualen left Chicago the 21st of November, 1887, and arrived in Canton the 29th of December. He wrote: "And so I arrive in Canton, one of China's largest cities, among the heathen idol-worshippers, for there are only a few hundred Christians here. Here I am with my work, with life or death before me. O God, my God, help me".[1.]

For thirty-two years this missionary labored on, laying the foundations of the work. Others came out to help. The Christian group enlarged itself and the work expanded. Educational work was taken on, and in every way the missionaries did their best. Up to the year 1934 some sixteen missionaries had served on the field. At present there are ten missionaries on the field, and six candidates accepted to go. The war years made work impossible for the duration of hostilities, but now the missionaries are back, and the work goes on. Educational work, pastoral work, medical work, and evangelism occupy the time and energies of the missionaries on the Canton-Hong Kong field.[2.]

II AFRICA

The pioneer on the Africa field was a young man who was born in Sweden in 1897. As a boy he had come to America, and as a youth had given himself to Christ and experienced then the joy and sweetness and power of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

1. Golden Jubilee Book
   pp. 240-241

2. Located in the Ubangi District, 1,100 miles from the coast, and bounded on the north and west by the Ubangi River.

Soon after his conversion, this young man, Titus Johnson, received "the call to service in regions beyond", as he expressed it. The Evangelical Free Church had no field in Africa at that time, but he was convinced that Congoland was his appointed field of labor, and so applied forappointment to that field under the Africa Inland Mission. Having graduated from the Free Church Bible Institute, and having been accepted by the Africa Inland Mission, he left for Africa, arriving at New Year, 1920, at the age of twenty-two years. In 1922, a call was extended to him to labor under the Free Church Mission Board and to open up a new field for missionary endeavor in that great unoccupied territory of Congo. So he did, and after several years of thrilling, hazardous, and fruitful pioneer missionary work, he came back to the home land. Since then, he has taken a medical degree from Northwestern University, has practised medicine in Chicago, and is now on his way back to the field to spend a considerable amount of time establishing a medical hospital on the field.[1.]

In 1924 four new missionaries arrived on the Africa field.[2.] The following year that little band of missionaries was reinforced by the arrival of six more workers. Others have been added to the missionary force since then, and some have had to come home, not to return again. Some have laid down their lives in Africa. The Africa field has seemed to many to be the most fruitful of all the missionary enterprises the Evangelical Free Church has entered upon. The report of the field in 1944 included the following paragraph: "Our fundamental purpose in missionary work is the building of a strong

1. Year Book, 1944
   pp. 46,47

2. Missionary Bulletin, Vol. I, No. 2.
   p. 6

3. Golden Jubilee Book
   p. 31

4. Ibid., pp. 252-256

African church. Every indication of a growth in the native church is, therefore, a cause for rejoicing. We are not thinking especially of a growth in numbers. What we long to see is a virile group of native Christians who can undertake, in years to come, the responsibility of their own church and its expansion. We are glad to report that during the past year the church has continued to support its own workers and in some cases has increased the number of those whom it supports. We have seen also indications of a growing sense of responsibility among the leaders for the direction and expansion of the native church".[1] At present, twenty-two missionaries serve the African field.[2]

III VENEZUELA

The Venezuelan field was opened up by an independent missionary just at the turn of the century in La Victoria.[3] He carried on an independent work and developed an independent mission until 1920 when the field was taken over by the Free Church. This missionary, David Finstrom, and his wife, are still carrying on the work, though quite advanced in years. The work they founded is confined to the State of Aragua.

Other fields have, however, been opened up and now work is being carried on in several localities, with two headquarters, the one in La Victoria on the Coast, and the other at Valle de la Pascua in the interior State of Guarico.[4] Along with the work of

1. Year Book, 1944
   p. 40

2. Missionary Bulletin, Vol. I, No. 2
   p. 7

evangelism, educational work is also being carried on, especially in behalf of the children in teaching them reading and writing, and the other fundamentals of an elementary education. Land has been purchased and secured for the erection of a Bible Institute and Seminary which in due time will take shape and become a center for the future Church of Venezuela.[1] Twenty missionaries serve the field in Venezuela at the present time.[2]

The denomination, apart from its foreign work, also sustains a very fruitful mission work in the State of Kentucky where nineteen home missionaries are at work. The task of reaching the home constituency is largely the responsibility of the various churches, but for the purpose of founding new fields in the various states, the churches of the denomination are grouped in Districts, of which there are nine at the present time. These Districts are each carrying on home mission work in each of their territories, and new churches are thus being added yearly to the list of those making up the Evangelical Free Church fellowship.

1. Golden Jubilee Book
   pp. 14-16

CHAPTER IV

INSTITUTIONS

I THE SEMINARY AND BIBLE INSTITUTE

There is perhaps no more important institution in the life of a denomination than its school or schools, from which its future pastors and workers flow, and where they are trained in the emphases of their particular fellowship. Free Church men have always been free spirits, and not too much bound by tradition and doctrinal creed. As a result, educational work has never seemed as important to them as it has to other groups.[1] The free independent spirit, the emphasis upon the Scriptures as the veritable Word of God, the burning missionary and evangelistic passion, and the doctrinal emphasis upon the work of the Holy Spirit and the expectation of Christ's early return all seemed to conspire against an emphasis upon education. If there was money to be spent, send it to the mission field! If there was time, let it not be wasted in the schools, let it be spent in the service!

Time, however, seems to mellow the enthusiasm of youth, and as the years have come and gone, there has been a new attitude toward education developing in the Evangelical Free Church. In 1947, the Evangelical Free Church Seminary and Bible Institute celebrates its fiftieth anniversary, but as an institution, it is still in its infancy, is only now beginning to feel something of a sense of its

1. 50th Anniversary Pamphlet

2. Golden Jubilee Book
   p. 269

place in the life of the denomination.[1.]

In the early years of the work the educational needs of the workers were supplied by short courses in Bible teaching and Christian training as the needs and means presented themselves. In the days of the early revivals it seemed that extensive training was not necessary, the heat and fire of revival made up for many things which education would have supplied. But as a more settled situation developed and the revival fires died down, the need for better trained workers and pastors appeared.

In the autumn of 1897, thirty-two young people gathered in the Oak Street hall in Chicago for the first sessions of what has now become the Evangelical Free Church Seminary and Bible Institute.[2.] The 1897 conference had authorized the starting of the school, and three months later it convened. Pastor P. J. Elmquist, who was chairman of the conference that year, took the initiative and was assisted by Rev. Axel Nordin and Prof. J. G. Princell. The term of instruction lasted but ten weeks, but there was great blessing received. The school was continued in 1898 with another ten week period of instruction, but no classes were held in 1899 and 1900. The year 1901 marks a new beginning, however, when the school was reorganized and incorporated and five students took the course. The following year saw much development. A more detailed plan of instruction was decided upon, a thirty week period of teaching started, and twenty-one students enrolled. Prof. Princell accepted the position of president of the school in 1903, and from that day till the day of his death in 1915, gave himself wholly to the work of the school.

1. Golden Jubilee Book
   pp. 266-270

2. 50th Anniversary Pamphlet

3. Golden Jubilee Book
   p. 33

Through the school, his influence has been felt throughout the whole fellowship of churches. He is preeminently the "grand old man of the Free Church".[1.]

In 1910 it was decided at the conference in Boone, Iowa, to move the school to Minneapolis. This was easily done, as someone at the conference remarked, since all that was needed was to move the professor and his swivel chair.[2.] There, in the rooms of the First Evangelical Free Church of Minneapolis, the school continued its work till the passing of the beloved Princell in the spring of 1915. These were dark days for the school's prospects, for it seemed that with the passing of Princell, there passed also the hopes of the school. No classes were held in 1915-16.

At the Turlock, California, conference, 1915, however, it was decided to ask the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago for an affiliation with it. This affiliation was graciously accepted after due consideration by the Institute Board of Directors, and a new period in the life of the school had its beginning. For fifteen years this happy and brotherly affiliation continued. The Free Church was free to "continue its prescribed courses and engage its own instructors as before. . . . Class rooms were free of charge, and the Free Church students were entitled to take any course the Institute offered".[3.] Hence the school was moved to Chicago. Dr. Gustaf Edwards, then pastor of the Lake View Free Church of Chicago, was called to assume the presidency, and the school reopened

1.Golden Jubilee Book
p. 296

2. Ibid., pp. 270-274

in the fall of 1916 with five student. Dr. Edwards served the interests of the school with a whole-heartedness which has left a most lasting impression upon those who studied under him.[1.] A few years later, Miss Anna Lindgren was added to the faculty, and still later, Prof. A. L. Wedell.

The arrangement with the Moody Bible Institute which continued for fifteen happy years was an advantageous one in many respects. It made possible a course of training in an educational environment which otherwise would have been impossible. It also brought the forthcoming missionaries and pastors of the Free Church into a fellowship with the student body of the Moody Bible Institute which broadened and deepened their outlook more than anything else could have done. The cosmopolitan outlook and the absence of a narrow sectarianism are still marks of the Free Church fellowship. Doctrinally, the stand taken by the leaders of the Moody Bible Institute and the Free Church generally was very close. Both were wholly committed to evangelical conservative theology, and an emphasis upon the personal imminent return of Christ. Yet, as the years went by into the early 20's, some of the brethren began to feel that a location and school of our own was becoming more and more of a necessity, and in 1926 the school moved to the north side of Chicago to its present location at 4211 N. Hermitage Avenue, though students still continued studies at the Moody Bible Institute for sometime to come.[2.]

As the school moved to the north side of Chicago, it was

1. School Catalog, 1943-1945
   pp. 14, 15

2. A Book of Remembrance
   pp. 19-31

3. Year Book, 1946
   pp. 16, 17

4. The Evangelical Beacon
   Vol. XV, No. 39, p. 2
   Vol. XV, No. 41, pp. 1, 8

5. Golden Jubilee Book
   p. 32

decided to add an Academy which would offer High School courses to prospective preachers and missionaries who had not had that training, and to Free Church youth in the area.[1] Prof. Wedell directed the work, and the Academy continued until 1939, when it was dropped in favor of concentration upon the Seminary and Bible Institute.[2]

During the war years, the school has continued to operate, and to fill an ever larger place in the denomination life. In 1946 at the conference at Medicine Lake, Minnesota, and at the annual conference of the Norwegian Free Church held the same year in Orange, New Jersey, a merger of the Free Church Seminary and Bible Institute with the theological school of the Norwegian Evangelical Free Church became possible,[3] a merger which was effected at the joint board meeting of the two school boards that same summer.[4] Now, under the direction of Dr. T. B. Madsen, the process of integration is continuing. The merger is a fact, though the two schools are at present meeting under their separate roofs and their own faculties serve them. It is hoped that a suitable location for purchase will soon be discovered which will bring the two schools under one roof and make the merger complete. The merger of the schools will in all likelihood be followed by a merger of the two denominations in the not too distant future.

II THE CHRISTIAN CHILDREN'S HOME

The Christian Children's Home, located in Holdrege, Nebraska, was founded in 1889.[5] Its beginnings were small, as are most

1. Fiftieth Anniversary Album
   pp. 11-44

beginnings. Rev. Axel Nordin, then pastor of the Free Mission Church of Phelps Center, Nebraska, a community about eight and one half miles northwest of Holdrege, took three children into his home who were in need of care and shelter. That was in 1888. These little children were first cared for by Mr. Nordin's mother, Mrs. Lars Nordin, but the following year, Miss Mary Johnson came from Chicago to assume the responsibility of caring for the little family, which by this time was growing.

As the project advanced, it soon seemed advisable to secure the future welfare of the home by incorporation, and so the home was duly incorporated under the laws of the state of Nebraska on March 1, 1889. By the same act of incorporation, the Christian Orphan Home Association was organized and the business of the home was transacted by a Board of Trustees in the name of the Association. This Association and method of continuing the work of the home was continued until 1924, when the home was taken over by the Evangelical Free Church. In 1937, the official name of the home was changed from "The Children's Orphan Home" to "The Christian Children's Home" which is its name at the present time.[1]

The home has passed through many varied experiences, and many hands have labored to satisfy the many children who have been received into the home. The home has always been open to needy children without consideration of denominational affiliations.

Bengal, speaking of our Lord, once wrote: "He had no children, that He might adopt all children". Axel Nordin, the founder of

1. Fiftieth Anniversary Album
   pp. 45-47

2. Ibid., p. 39

3. Ibid., pp. 57-60

the Home, was like his Master in that he never had a home of his own, though he had a keen love for children. It was while he served the church at Phelps Center between the years 1887-1890 that he felt constrained to take three friendless children into his parental home, and thus the home had its beginning.[1.] During the years intervening between Nordin's act of mercy in receiving the initial three children into his home, and the time of his death in 1912, some 250 children had come and gone through the home for longer or shorter periods of time.

Superintendents of the home, and workers carried on the work and served the boys and girls until 1916, when Mr. Gustin with whose name the home is connected in the minds of everyone of this generation, took over the work, a task which he faithfully fulfilled until his retirement thirty years later.

During the years, several buildings have been owned and used by the home. The present building, valued at the time of dedication at $170,000.00 was constructed in 1925-26.[2.] It is located a mile out of Holdrege. It is a splendid building for its purpose, accomodating one hundred children.

All the work and attention that is assumed when the responsibility of rearing children is accepted is carried out faithfully. The children have been given careful and systematic medical attention through the cooperation of the physicians and dentists in the city of Holdrege.[3.] The educational needs of the boys and girls are taken care of at the Home itself up to the eighth grade, and since 1927,

1. Fiftieth Anniversary Album
   pp. 60-64

2. Ibid., pp. 64-67

3. Golden Jubilee Book
   p. 32

4. Ibid., pp. 279-280

all children of the Home have been given the opportunity of a High School education at the Holdrege High School.[1] The children's spiritual welfare is given close attention.[2] Daily devotions in the Home itself, and the privileges offered by the Trinity Evangelical Free Church of Holdrege give the children every opportunity to find Christ and begin the Christian life.

III THE SWEDISH OLD PEOPLE'S HOME

As there is a home for the children, there is also a home for the aged, located in Boone, Iowa.[3] The Swedish Old People's Home at Boone, Iowa, is not as well known to the Evangelical Free Church constituency, mainly because it has not needed to come to the various churches with pleas for financial support, being almost self-sustaining.

The steps which brought the home into existence were taken at the yearly conference in Boone, in 1910.[4] Rev. Edward Thorell, journeying from Colorado to Boone for the conference, stopped off in Kearney, Nebraska, to visit an old friend in the ministry, Rev. L. M. Ekman, who at the time was visiting with another friend in the ministry, Rev. H. G. Swedell. But Brother Ekman was much depressed at the time of this particular visit, the reason being that now since age had crept upon him, he was no longer wanted in the various churches, and being almost destitute, he gave way to melancholy and depression. To make matters worse, the county authorities had bade him move on since they did not want to become responsible for him in case he could no longer care for himself.

1. Golden Jubilee Book
   p. 280

Mr. Thorell's heart was touched, and he went to the conference in Boone with a burning desire in his heart to do something about the situation. The conference responded to his proposals and decided to build a home for aged ministers as well as for others who need the care and protection of such a home. Since the time of its dedication in 1913, the Evangelical Free Church of Boone has taken a most gracious interest in the home, caring faithfully for it and its needs.

This is another example of the quiet effectiveness of Christian love. The provision of such a home as this was seen as a necessity, and no sooner had the need been realized than the work was begun. The Church in Boone donated the land, a whole city block in a most favorable location in the city. The City of Boone, through its Commercial Association, gave $5,000 to the Home. Friends contributed and the home became a reality. Among the first to be admitted to the home was Mr. Ekman, and there he spent the remaining years of his life in quietness and peace.[1.]

The original building had two stories with a full basement, a substantial brick structure. In 1920 a third story was added which increased the capacity of the home by more than one third.

1. Golden Jubilee Book
   p. 257

2. Ibid., p. 258

CHAPTER V

ORGANIZATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

I WOMAN'S HOME AND FOREIGN MISSIONARY SOCIETY

In the missionary work of the major denominations, the women have often played an important part, and it has not been otherwise in the Free Church. Organized in 1908, the Woman's Home and Foreign Missionary Society of the Evangelical Free Church has done a very significant piece of work, undertaking tasks which would have been left undone if they had not undertaken them.[1] The first endeavor to which the women of the Free Church put themselves was the erection of a missionary home in Canton. The Ladies Aid Society of the Oak Street Hall (now Summerdale Church) in Chicago sent invitations to each of the Ladies Aid Societies of the Free Churches in the Chicago area to meet with them on March 19, 1908. Five societies responded to the invitation. After a period of discussion, another meeting was called for April 16th at the same location, and here the Woman's Home and Foreign Mission Society was organized, "in the name of the Lord and with faith in his promises".[2]

When the task of raising $10,000 for a missionary home in Canton was undertaken, there were no prospects whatever, humanly speaking, of any success in the venture. But the venture was undertaken none-the-less in the hope that the challenge would appeal to the women of the denomination. It did, and the ladies of the various Free Churches were thus molded into an organization which has

1. Jubilee Book, Golden
   pp. 258-259

2. Anna J. Lindgren, Afterglow
   pp. 108, 109

3. Year Book, 1946
   pp. 136, 137

4. Ibid., p. 137

continually met challenges quite comparable to the initial one which brought the organization into existence. By 1910, the first $1,000 was forwarded to Canton for the purchase of a lot. By 1913, the building was completed to such an extent that it was possible to occupy it. In 1916, the Missionary Home in Canton, China, was presented to the Evangelical Free Church, clear of debt, having cost between $11,000 and $12,000.[1.] No doubt much of the success of the undertaking was due to Mrs. Josephine Princell who acted as chairman and organizer of the new society, and spent considerable time in travelling in its interests in the summer of 1908.[2.]

The Women's Home and Foreign Missionary Society has through the years interested itself almost solely in mission work. It has supported missionaries on the various fields, and is today responsible for the support of four missionaries now on the field.[3.] It has assisted in building projects in China apart from the original Missionary Home, and in Venezuela. It has sent gifts regularly to the missionaries on the various field at the Christmas season. It has sustained a lively interest in the institutions of the Free Church and in its home missionary projects. At present, its energies are bent toward developing a $50,000 Revolving Fund from which the various churches may borrow for building purposes.[4.]

Every Free Church woman is desired as a member of the organization. The annual dues amounts to $1.00 per member. In 1936, a Daughter's Auxiliary was organized to supplement the work of the older organization.

1. Laborers Together With Him
   pp. 7-12

2. Ibid., p. 8

3. Year Book, 1946
   pp. 208-216

II THE MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION

The Ministerial Association of the Evangelical Free Church was organized in 1894 in Boone, Iowa.[1] The purpose of the organization was two-fold, to offer comfort and encouragement to the members of the organization, and to guard the Evangelical Free Church fellowship "from undesirable elements posing in the garb of Christian liberty, while misrepresenting the cause of Christ".[2] The days of beginning were gracious days in many particulars, but they were also dangerous days, since the very fervency of the early gatherings and the continued insistence upon freedom and liberty left the door open for some who were not truly one at heart with the founders of the Free Church movement. The formation of a ministerial association gave an opportunity for control, and it was with the full consent of all that the Ministerial Association was founded. Articles of agreement were drawn up covering the general purpose of the Association, and a constitution was adopted.

Thirty-seven Free Church pastors entered the fellowship at its inception in 1894. At the twenty-fifth anniversary of the organization, there were one hundred and nineteen pastors and missionaries as members. The total membership today stands at two hundred and forty-seven.[3]

The Association has contributed immeasurably through the years in maintaining a high standard amongst the brethren in the ministry. It has also assisted the aged brethren with financial gifts, and has recently been instrumental in developing and putting

1. Pamphlet, Free Church Youth

2. Ibid.
Year Book, 1946, pp. 162-171

into effect a Minister's Annuity and Aid plan to which both pastors and churches contribute.

III THE FREE CHURCH YOUTH FELLOWSHIP

Newest of all the Free Church organizations is the national Free Church Youth Fellowship, organized in June, 1941, in Denver, Colorado.[1.] Latest of all the organizations, it is not least in its accomplishments. Organized mainly for action, it has already assumed the support of five full-time missionaries, is at present engaged in a campaign to supply each of the mission fields with either a station wagon, a truck, or a jeep, and other "necessities". It maintains seven committees--Missionary, School, Society Activities, Conference, Finance, Servicemen, and Publicity, each operating and keeping scores of young people active. It feeds program suggestions into the individual societies and edits a young people's page in the denominational publication. The current year finds it intensively engaged in a great soul-winning, "Everyone Win One", campaign. It is supporting a full-time field secretary who is visiting each of the societies of the various churches with an intensive series of lessons on Bible memorization work and personal evangelism.[2.]

Much of the success of the Free Church Youth Fellowship is due to the energetic and deeply consecrated young assistant editor of the Evangelical Beacon, Mel Larson. It was primarily his vision that created the F.C.Y.F., and through the six years of its

1. Golden Jubilee Book
   pp. 282, 283

existence, his hand has guided much of its endeavor. If one is ever tempted to look with misgivings upon the future of the Free Church work, a recollection of the accomplishments of the F.C.Y.F. and the wonderful young people now gradually assuming control of the denomination and its agencies will drive away all pessimism as to the future of the Evangelical Free Church of America.

IV PUBLICATIONS

The most influential, yet often the most unappreciated, work done by anyone in Christian work is the editing of the material which, week after week from one year to the next, keeps coming into the homes of the people, feeding their minds and directing their thoughts. Two publications today serve the Free Church constituency, the Swedish language bi-monthly, Chicago-Bladet, and the English language weekly, The Evangelical Beacon.

Chicago-Bladet is the older of the two publications, being in existence eight years before the organization of the Free Church in 1884.[1] It has continued through the years to serve not only the Free Church denomination, but also a large Swedish-speaking constituency. Its days of usefulness are, however, numbered, and it is only a question of time before it will either cease to exist, or be merged with some other Swedish-language religious periodical. At present, J. C. Olson is editor and the paper is edited in Minneapolis.

The Evangelical Beacon was born in October, 1931, after several unsuccessful attempts at maintaining a bi-lingual periodical

1. Golden Jubilee Book
   pp. 282, 283

in cooperation with Chicago-Bladet.[1] It is at present filling an ever enlarging need in the Free Church, and has, since its beginning, held the respect and best wishes of the Free Church people. It is edited in Chicago under the direction of its editor, Roy A. Thompson.

CHAPTER VI

THE YEARS AHEAD

As one attempts to discover something of what lies in the future for an institution, one is tempted to allow one's own desires and well wishes to color to a greater or less extent the prospects of the possible in the years ahead. This is inevitable, particularly if the institution is greatly beloved. One must attempt a proper balance between the opportunities that seem to present themselves, and the vitality of the inner life of the institution to successfully meet the challenge of these opportunities.

To begin with, the Evangelical Free Church is at present in a state of transition from a Swedish church to an American church. The process of Americanization has been proceeding through the years, but it is an agonizingly slow process. It has not been until well within the 1930's that most of the churches have provided Sunday morning worship services in the English language for their young people and the strangers at their gate. Now, without exception, all public meetings of the churches are held in the English language. A breach in the wall separating the Evangelical Free Church from the community has been made. But it is only a breach. In many of the churches, the psychological situation is not friendly to strangers. The isolation of the older generation has been assumed by the younger, and often the ministry has not had the vision to attack the problem. In some particulars this isolation has not been harmful--even beneficial, in shielding the fellowship from many subversive tendencies.

On the other hand, the isolation has hindered the fruitfulness of the denomination and limited its influence. It seems a strange paradox, this, that a denomination can be so unmissionary-minded when it concerns its immediate neighbor, and still carry on a foreign missions program far beyond the average proportion. As the years go by, the foreign heretage of the Evangelical Free Church will be less and less evident, and the national peculiarities will disappear.

And so the Evangelical Free Church is awakening to discover itself in the camp of evangelical conservative Christianity on the American scene. Its relation to its sister denominations is now in the making. In its theology and in its methods it is conservative. It has cooperated with the National Association of Evangelicals rather than the Federal Council of Churches. Theologically, it has not been influenced by American liberalism, and has consequently been spared thus far the agonizing ruptures caused by the fundamentalist-modernist debate. This has been good for denominational unity in the period of growth when unity was essential. It is now entering a period, however, when the younger men are beginning to ask questions about many things the older men took for granted, as evidenced by the state of confusion that now exists concerning the teachings of the Scriptures upon the subject of the return of Christ.

Agitation is under way to adopt a creed in the Ministerial Association, an agitation that will most likely succeed. But the

adoption of a creed at this particular time seems to some of the men of the denomination a step in the wrong direction. An adopted creed will not be forged out in the fires of controversy and conviction, as it must be if it is to be an expression of a vital force in the inner life of the denomination. The Evangelical Free Church, along with many other kindred denominations, must rethink its theology in the light of a new day. And if it is to come through the travail of rebirth into a new life and a new period of significant fruitful service, it must be the younger men of the denomination who will have to successfully grapple with the problem. The Seminary must play an important role in the struggle of the future. The question instictively rises in the mind: What kind of men are they, to whom the hopes of the future are thus committed? Does the future look bright in the light of the Seminary as it is functioning today, and in the men whom it is feeding into the life of the denomination? We believe they are men who warrant every confidence.

The future of the Evangelical Free Church is, of course, bound up with the future of its sister churches on the American scene, and the trend taken there cannot but vitally affect her. That she has some contribution to make it may be assumed, and that that contribution will be in the favor of religious liberty and individualism may be taken for granted. She stands today for, and will in the future lend her weight to, any movement that will stand against the present trend toward planned economy with authority imposed from the top down. The effectiveness of her influence will

1. See article entitled: Crystallizing Our Faith
Evangelical Beacon, Vol. XVI, No. 7., p. 3-4.

be in direct proportion to the understanding her leaders have of the elements operating in society, and the vitality they will bring to the struggle.

In methods, she will have to make considerable revision. The days of revival in which she had her birth are gone. But the memory of them lingers on, and the heart wistfully longs for their return. Would to God they would! But there is nothing gained in permitting the memories of the past to paralyze the efforts of the present. New methods other than the mass appeal of reaching men for Christ must be developed.

Will the Free Church ever merge with any of her sister fellowships? Perhaps, if the ecumenical movement continues to gain momentum. A merger with the Norwegian Evangelical Free Church is imminent. Perhaps other mergers will take place in the not too distant future.

The Free Church has its problems.[1] Sometimes it seems as though the problems are those which other denominations have faced for years, and historically we are far behind our times. Perhaps, in the providence of God, years can be gained by an upsurge of new vital life, and the death pangs of the old will be merged with the birth pangs of the new, and a great new powerful spiritual movement will begin. Progress is being made all along the line, but it seems so slow, and one cannot but desire and pray for greater things, not only for the Free Church, but for all Christendom. A bewildered and

tottering world needs this thing. God grant it be not long delayed.

APPENDIX

EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCHES ORGANIZED BEFORE 1900

Swedish Evangelical Free Church, Denver, Colo. 1880

Swedish Evangelical Free Church of Colorado Springs, Colo. 1895

Swedish Evangelical Free Church of Eaton, Colo. 1890

Swedish Free Mission Church, Greely, Colo. 1896

Scandinavian Christian Church, Stockholm, S. D. 1891

First Swedish Christian Congregation, Beresford, S.D. 1883

Swedish Christian Emmanuel Church, Holmquist, S. D. 1885

First Evangelical Free Church of Boone, Iowa. 1872

Evangelical Free Church, Albert City, Iowa. 1894

The Marathon Evangelical Free Church, Marathon, Iowa. 1898

The Evangelical Free Church of Des Moines, Iowa. 1890

Oakdale Evangelical Free Church, Meriden, Iowa. 1892

The Evangelical Free Church, Madrid, Iowa. 1873

The Swedish Evangelical Free Church, Kiron, Iowa. 1880

The Arthur Evangelical Free Church, Arthur, Iowa. 1885

First Swedish Evangelical Free Church, Summerdale, Chicago, Ill. 1880

The Elim Free Church of Chicago, Ill. 1896

Swedish Evangelical Free Church, Joliet, Ill. 1892

Lake View Evangelical Free Church, Chicago, Ill. 1892

Swedish Free Church, New Windsor, Ill. 1898

The Swedish Christian Free Church of Rockford, Ill. 1884

North Austin Free Mission Church, Chicago, Ill. 1888

Free Swedish Evangelical Church, Moline, Ill. 1890

Swedish Evangelical Free Mission Church, Ludington, Mich. 1882

The Swedish Evangelical Free Church, Bay City, Mich. 1888

The Swedish Evangelical Free Church of Albion, Minn. 1882

The Swedish Evangelical Free Mission Church, East Chain, Minn. 1889

The Swedish Evangelical Free Church, Kost, Minn. 1889

Lake Eunice Free Church, Lake Eunice, Minn. 1892

The Scandinavian Free Church, Kerkoven, Minn. 1891

First Evangelical Free Church, Minneapolis, Minn. 1884

Swedish Evangelical Free Church, Milaca, Minn. 1893

Scandinavian Evangelical Free Church, Moorhead, Minn. 1883

Swedish Evangelical Free Church of St. Paul, Minn. 1883

The Swedish Christian Church, Spruce Hill, Minn. 1886

The Swedish Free Church, Malmo, Minn. 1888

Evangelical Free Church, Windom, Minn. 1895

Free Church, Burns, Minn. 1892

The Evangelical Free Church, Constance, Minn. 1890

Kragero Free Mission Congregation, Kragero, Minn. 1894

Scandinavian Free Church, Orrock, Minn. 1895

Free Church, Svea Hill, Minn. 1894

The Swedish Evangelical Free Mission Church of Wyanette, Minn. 1896

Swedish Evangelical Free Church, Concord, Neb. 1892

The Evangelical Mission Church at Keene, Neb. 1880

Swedish Evangelical Emanuel Church of Holcomb, Neb. 1899

The Evangelical Free Church, Kearney, Neb. 1899

The Swedish Evangelical Mission Church, Loomis, Neb. 1886

The Church of God, Newman Grove, Neb. 1883

The First Swedish Evangelical Free Church of Hamilton County, Neb. 1885

Swedish Evangelical Free Church, Oakland, Neb. 1895

The Westmark Evangelical Church of God, Loomis, Neb. 1880

Holdrege Evangelical Church, Holdrege, Neb. 1889

The Evangelical Union Church, Sumner, Neb. 1898

The First Swedish Evangelical Church, McKeesport, Pa. 1882

The Swedish Evangelical Free Church, Kimbro, Texas. 1897

The Swedish Evangelical Free Church of Seattle, Wash. 1892

The Apple River Evangelical Free Church, Amery, Wis. 1888

The Swedish Evangelical Free Church, Wolf Creek, Wis. 1898

The Swedish Evangelical Free Church, Junction City, Wis. 1891

The Evangelical Free Church, Ella & Pepin Hill, Wis. 1896

GTU Library
3 2400 00403 4538

LIBRARY USE ONLY